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ABSTRACT

The Saanich Elementary Internship Program (SEIP), a team effort between the University of Victoria (British Columbia) faculty of education and the Saanich School District, was investigated for the purpose of improving the preparation of elementary school teachers. The Saanich School District was primarily responsible for selection and placement of interns, and the selection and coordination of the sponsor teachers. The university was principally responsible for teaching the professional year courses for the interns and supervising them during the practicum. An overview is presented of the activities and duties of the interns during each of the four phases of the 7-month program, and a schedule of the courses of instruction during the program is summarized. At the conclusion of the first year of the program, an evaluation questionnaire was submitted to sponsor teachers, interns, university supervisors, and school principals. A list of results is presented on responses to questions on program satisfaction, academic preparation, program organization/administration/communication, and professional growth. A list is also provided of comments on the strengths of the program and suggested modifications. Seven recommendations are offered based on the information from the questionnaire and from interviews with the participants. (JD)

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S.E.I.P. - AN INITIAL STEP IN SEEKING
CHANGE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This article is an evaluation report on a pilot internship for prospective elementary school teachers. It gives an overview of the nature of the internship and the results of questionnaires completed by the interns, sponsor teachers, university supervisors and principals associated with the internship.

S.E.I.P. - AN INITIAL STEP IN SEEKING

CHANGE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Teacher education programs have been extensively criticized over the past few years. Recently, the criticism has focussed on the articulation of pre-service teacher preparation and actual classroom practice, Silvernail & Costello (1983), British Columbia Ministry of Education (1982).

In response to the criticism, schools of education have experimented with the length of time and sequencing of practice teaching programs, in attempts to obtain optimum results. However, varying the length of the practicum and adjusting the placement of the practicum in the teacher education program have not produced conclusive results. In fact, research on the traditional types of practice teaching has produced conflicting results. For example, some researchers, Isher (1967), Dumas (1969) and Copeland (1978) have reported positive results from studies involving the length and sequencing of the practicum. However, Weinstuck & Peccolo (1970), Jacobs (1968), Hoy (1968), Mathews (1967), Hoy and Rees (1977) report on studies with results that are negative and inconsistent with the former studies.

The contradicting and inconclusive results of research in student teaching indicates a need for further study and scrutiny, Silvernail and Costello (1983). In response to this stated need, a pilot internship program was instigated at the University of Victoria. The internship was piloted in cooperation with the Saanich School District and was named the Saanich Elementary Internship Program (S.E.I.P.). Elementary education at the University is a five-year Bachelor of

Education program. The internship is scheduled during the fourth year.

OVERVIEW OF THE 1984-85 PROGRAM

A committee of elementary principals and teachers in the Saanich School District acted upon a recommendation that an elementary internship program be piloted in their District. A major intent of the program was to enhance the integration of educational theory and educational practice at the elementary level. A committee of University and Saanich District personnel met frequently to formulate an outline for a pilot program. The ten-month Saanich Elementary Internship Program finally developed from the meetings and was initiated in the academic year 1984-85.

It was agreed that the program would be a team effort between the University of Victoria Faculty of Education and Saanich School District. The School District was principally responsible for the selection and placement of the interns, and the selection and coordination of the sponsor teachers. The University was principally responsible for the teaching of the professional year (fourth year) courses for the interns and supervision of the interns during the practicum. The evaluation of the interns was a joint task of the sponsor teachers and the University supervisors.

Program Description

The major characteristic of the S.E.I.P. was that the students spent close to seven months, September to November and January to April, in a practicum situation in one of the twelve participating schools in Saanich. During the practica, students spent Monday through Thursday in the schools and came to the University for classes on Friday.

The Internship year was separated into four phases.

PHASE I was seven weeks of university instruction during July and August. During this seven weeks, the interns enrolled in mathematics methods, reading methods, learning difficulties and learning resource classes. Prior to the internship, the interns had taken methods courses in art, music and physical education.

PHASE II consisted of a ten-week (Monday to Thursday) practicum and university instruction on Fridays (September to November). During the practica, students worked under the guidance and supervision of a classroom teacher and a University supervisor. On Friday, students took courses in evaluation, health education and a seminar in elementary teaching. These same Friday classes were continued in the PHASE IV practicum.

PHASE III consisted of four and a half weeks university instruction from November to December. In this phase, students were enrolled in science methods, social studies methods, oral and written language arts methods.

PHASE IV was a fifteen week (Monday to Thursday) practica with a continuation of Friday classes in evaluation, health education and the elementary seminar.

Because most of the Saanich elementary schools are in a rural setting and some distance from the University, the interns had to do a fair amount of travelling. To help cover these costs the Saanich School District gave each intern a cost-of-living allowance of \$175.00 per month for each of eight months from September, 1984 to April, 1985.

The following table summarizes the schedule of the internship.

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF THE INTERNSHIP SCHEDULE

PHASE I	<u>July - August (7 weeks)</u>	
		<u>Hours of Instruction</u>
	Reading Instruction Methods	34
	Learning Difficulties	34
	Mathematics Methods	46
PHASE II	<u>September - November (10 weeks)</u>	
	Practicum (Monday to Thursday)	
	University classes (Friday)	<u>Hours of Instruction</u>
	Evaluation	34
	Health Education	34
PHASE III	<u>November - December (4 weeks + 2 days)</u>	
		<u>Hours of Instruction</u>
	Science Methods	22
	Social Studies Methods	22
	Oral/Written Language Methods	34
PHASE IV	<u>January - April (15 weeks)</u>	
	Practicum (Monday to Thursday)	
	Continuation PHASE II University classes on Friday	

B.Ed. students in their third year who would be admissible to the elementary professional year (fourth year) were informed in January 1984 of the S.E.I.P. and were invited to apply. Forty-four students applied. The applicants were interviewed by the principals of Saanich elementary schools, and twenty interns were selected.

PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The questionnaires used in this study were a modification of the Mitchell Internship Questionnaire Instrument (1980).

Questionnaires were completed by thirty Sponsor Teachers, nineteen Interns, three University Supervisors, and seven Principals.

Most of the items on the Sponsor Teacher's, the Intern's and the Supervisor's questionnaires were rating scales. The ratings ranged from 1 to 5. The Principal's questionnaire required only a verbal response.

The following results were compiled from the responses of the Sponsor Teachers, Interns, Faculty Supervisors, and the Principals.

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS THAT FOCUSED ON PROGRAM

SATISFACTION:

1. The concept of the Internship Program as a teacher training program received strong endorsement from the Sponsor Teachers, Interns and Faculty Supervisors.
2. Both Interns and Sponsor Teachers generally believe that the Internship Program increased the Interns' awareness of what it is like to be a teacher.
3. The Interns and Sponsor Teachers felt the skills and knowledge acquired were appropriate and helpful in preparing Interns to become effective teachers.
4. There was strong support for the continuation of the Saanich Elementary Internship Program with suggestions for minor modifications.

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS THAT FOCUSED ON ACADEMIC

PREPARATION:

1. The Interns generally agreed that the internship provided them with a good theoretical base for teaching and knowledge of practical teaching skills.

2. The Interns strongly agreed that the 1984 summer courses: Reading/Language Methods, Mathematics Methods and Learning Difficulties were useful to them. However, the Interns seriously question the usefulness of the Learning Resources course.
3. The Interns seriously questioned the usefulness of the Evaluation and Health Education courses and the Elementary Education Seminar that were scheduled on Fridays during the two practicum phases of the internship.

Further study is needed to learn if the Interns were reacting to the courses studied or whether they were reacting to having the classes scheduled on Fridays during the practicum.

4. The Interns seriously questioned the usefulness of the Science and Social Studies Methods courses that were scheduled in November/December 1984.

Further study is needed to determine the cause of the Interns reaction to these two key methods classes. The Interns considered the Language Arts (Oral/Written) Methods course to be fairly useful.

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS THAT FOCUSED ON PROGRAM ORGANIZATION/ADMINISTRATION/COMMUNICATION:

1. Both the Interns and Sponsor Teachers felt that the internship program was well organized and well administered by those at the University.
2. The Interns and Sponsor Teachers agreed that the amount of contact with Sponsor teachers/Interns, and the Principals and other staff was very satisfactory. The Interns and Sponsor Teachers also agreed that the amount of contact with Faculty Supervisors was less than satisfactory.

3. The Interns and Sponsors agreed that the quality of interaction with Sponsor Teachers/Interns and the Principals and other staff were very satisfactory. However, the Interns and Sponsor Teachers felt that the quality of interaction with Faculty Supervisors was less than satisfactory.
4. The Faculty Supervisors agreed that the amount and quality of interaction with the Interns, Sponsor Teachers and Principals to were very satisfactory. However, the three Supervisors did not agree on the amount and quality of interaction with the Program Coordinators. Two supervisors gave a very satisfactory rating and the other a moderate satisfactory rating.
5. Seventy-two percent of the Sponsor Teachers felt that the criteria for evaluating the performance of the Interns was clear and well-defined. The Sponsor Teachers generally agreed that the criteria served as good indicators of teacher effectiveness.

The Sponsor Teachers strongly agree that they should have input in establishing criteria for evaluating teaching effectiveness.

Concerning the clarity of defining evaluation criteria, the three Supervisors were split. Two said yes, the criteria were clear and well-defined, and one said no.

6. Principals and Sponsor Teachers felt they had ample opportunity for input into the development and operation of the program.
7. Principals and Sponsor Teachers felt that the University encouraged feedback on the shortcomings of the Program, and was willing to act on any suggested changes.

8. The Principals and Sponsor Teachers generally agreed that the University had a good grasp of the principles of internship.
9. The Interns felt that the Sponsor Teachers were more effective than the Faculty Supervisor in keeping the Interns informed regarding strengths and weaknesses in their teaching.

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS THAT FOCUSED ON PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

1. The Faculty Supervisors and Sponsor Teachers generally agreed that the internship experience had assisted Sponsor Teachers' professional development and educational awareness.
2. The Sponsor Teachers felt the presence of Interns in their classroom and the supervision training sessions provided them the opportunity to try new ideas and alter the teaching and supervision techniques.
3. The Sponsor Teachers and Interns agreed that the Internship Program provided the Interns the opportunities and skills to analyze and evaluate their teaching performance.
4. Sponsor Teachers and Interns agreed that the Internship Program provided the Intern with the opportunity to gain awareness of:
 - the demands and expectations of teaching
 - procedures and policies of classroom and school organization
 - procedures and policies of the school system and teacher organizations
 - individual differences, socio-economic conditions and community factors that influence the school setting.
5. Interns felt that most of the methods instruction provided by the University was generally satisfactory, with the exception of a few courses.

In addition to the rating scales, the interns, sponsors and supervisors were asked to identify the strengths of the internships, and to state what modifications they felt were needed to improve the program. The following is a summary of the statements given. The number of responses in each category is shown in parentheses.

Comments within each category are ordered by frequency.

STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAM

1. Length of time the student teachers are in the schools (36)
 - wide variety of school-related, first-hand experiences
 - opportunity to perceive and respond to students as individuals
 - benefit to school
 - opportunity to establish ownership of class
 - opportunity for reflective thinking
2. Opportunity for development of teaching skills (12)
 - long range planning
 - team teaching
 - working through teaching strategies
 - management skills
 - acquiring knowledge of curriculum
3. Structure of the Program (11)
 - high quality of student teachers
 - good initial screening
 - in schools in September for initial organization
 - cooperation of university supervisor in report writing
 - unrealistic expectations
 - on-the-job training
 - less stressful than 6 week practicum
 - paid intern has status

THE FOLLOWING ARE STATEMENTS OF SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS:

1. Supervisors (34)
 - should have much more contact with interns and sponsors in terms of observations and conferences
 - should be experienced in the area they are observing
 - should be organized in advance, punctual, and make concrete suggestions
 - all supervisors should observe all interns

2. University courses (33)

- should not be offered during practicum so interns can be in schools Monday to Friday
- methods courses should precede practicum
- all courses should be relevant to practicum
- should include the opportunity for all interns to share practicum experience

3. Interns (13)

- should visit other classes and schools
- should visit their schools in the previous spring
- should arrive in September prepared to teach two subjects
- should arrive in October, allowing sponsor to organize class in September (but observe for first week)
- should observe sponsors more at the beginning
- should meet all together with all sponsors
- should teach social studies, science, art, music, P.E. in first term; math, L.A. in second term
- should not do self-evaluation
- should not teach grade 1 in September

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations regarding the Saanich Elementary Internship Program are based on the information from the questionnaires and from verbal input from principals, interns, sponsor teachers and University personnel during debriefing seminars held throughout the year.

1. The Saanich Elementary Internship Program should be continued with a few minor modifications.
2. Internship university courses should not be scheduled during the practicum. The interns should be in the schools from Monday to Friday.
3. More methods courses should precede the practicum.
4. Improve the amount and quality of interaction between the university supervisors and the interns.

5. Improve the observation and conferencing skills and techniques of sponsor teachers, interns and faculty supervisors.
6. Improve the content, instruction and sequencing of some of the university courses.
7. Increase the relevance of some of the university courses and the practicum experiences.

No matter how carefully student teaching is structured and how competently student teachers are supervised, by its very nature, student teaching is never congruent to actual professional practice. Nevertheless, further study is needed in order to improve the articulation of pre-service teacher education and actual classroom practice.

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